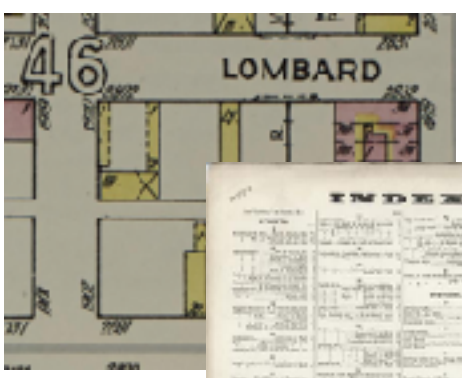
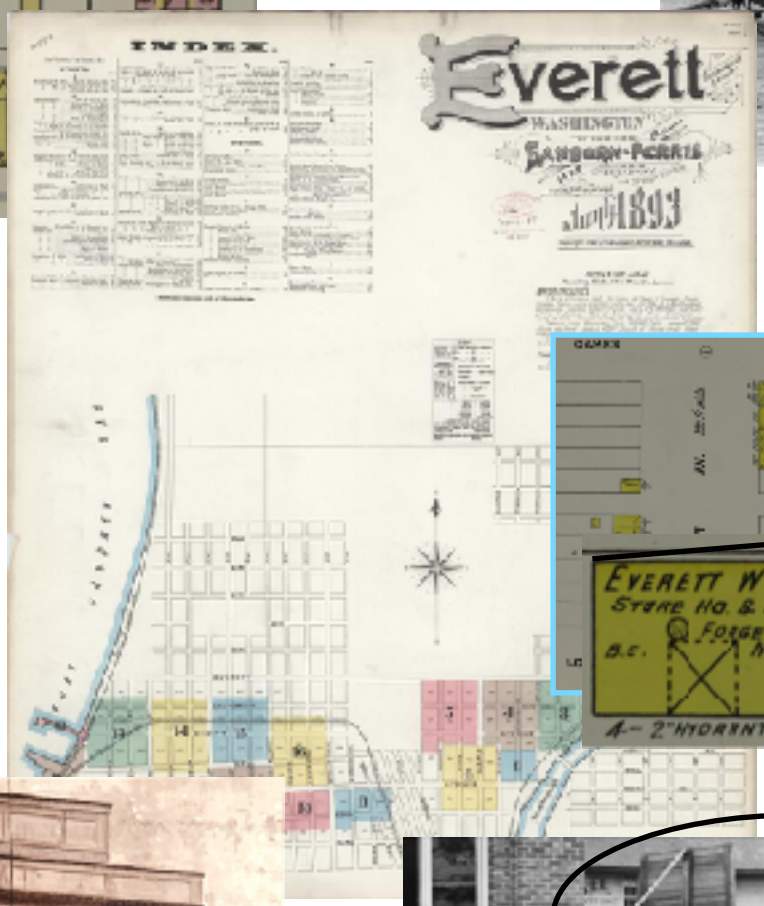
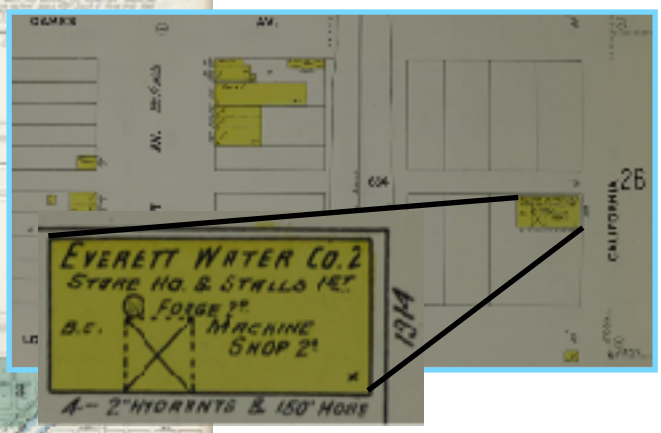
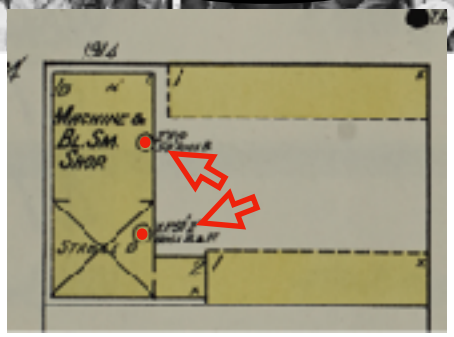
The History of the Labor Temple Parking Lot Sink-hole

R. Foster 2025









The Parking Lot Sink-Hole: An Answer?

The background on sources used to come to a conclusion on the sink-hole and a conclusion based on those sources. Stick with it :)

Background

Everett was named after the 15 year-old son of Charles Colby: Everett Colby. “Everett” was the code word Eastern land speculators gave to their planned port city on Port Gardner Bay. They were afraid other land speculators would mess up their plans to get even richer so they tried to keep it hush-hush.

From about 1888 to 1893, Everett exploded in growth with electricity, street cars, theaters, and industry. It was basically whipping Snohomish in the battle for who would be the major city in the area.

Everett was incorporated as a city in 1893 just in time for the U.S. economy to crash and nearly wipe out the place out. People left. All the rich easterners pulled investments and…here is where it gets us…businesses closed, were sold or transferred, and records are not all that clear. Businesses that provided utilities, for instance, were often privately owned and then were taken over by the city. So good records are a bit difficult to find without a really deep dig. Or going to the history room at the Everett Library, which I have not done…yet.

Wood Burns

The early Everett area was covered with trees-I mean dense forest-so it makes sense that wood would be used in not only construction of businesses and homes, but also for streets.

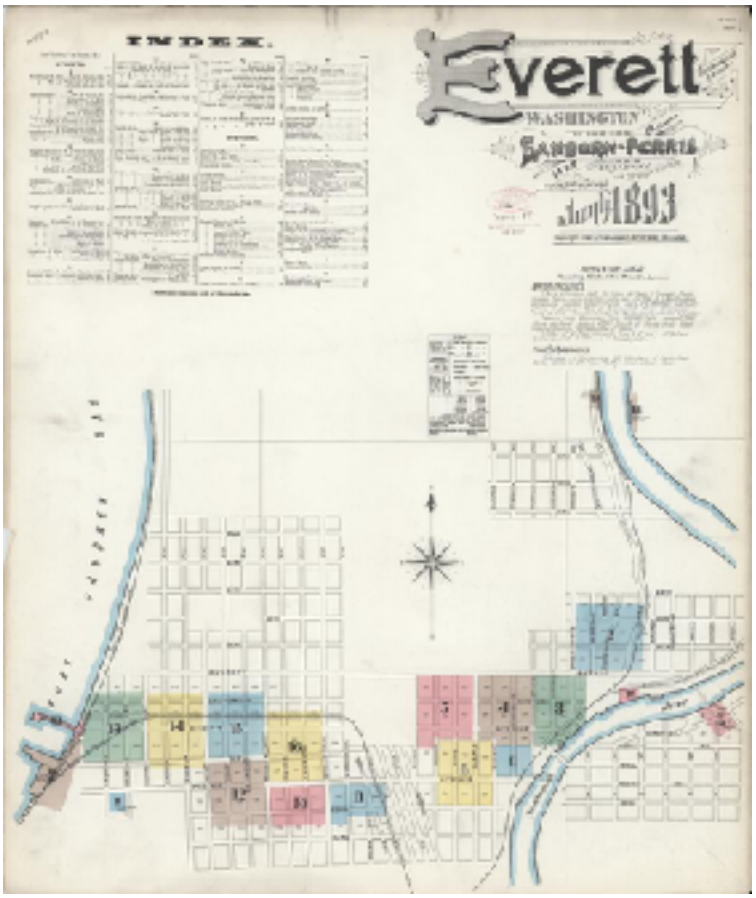
This first photo shows a wood planked California street. The photo is looking from the water and West up the hill towards Broadway. That is a bunch of wood!

And, since the idea of restricting the location of certain types of businesses wasn’t a thing yet, and the city was growing so fast, fire was always in the back of people’s minds. (For example, buildings across the railroad tunnel from the Labor Temple housed a hotel that was very close to a meat packing business with a smoke house.

So worrying about fire and the lost of investments was a perfect opportunity for companies like the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

There are two basic records that you can still find: Water service and Fire Insurance. The Everett Railway, Light and Power Co. controlled the former, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps took care of the latter. They made maps of cities that emphasized what materials a building was made of and also noted the location of water mains, fire alarms, fire hydrants and hoses. Insurance companies would use their maps to decide who to insure.



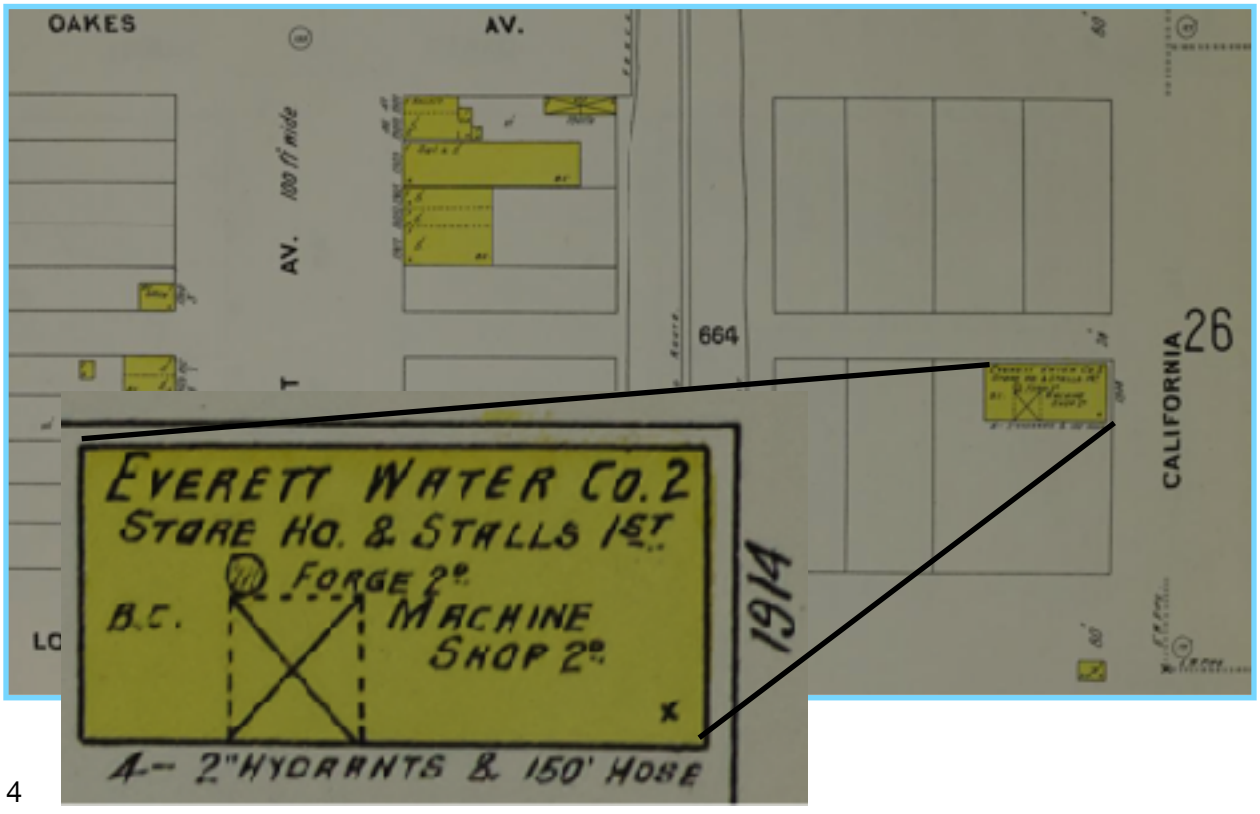
According to the Library of Congress:

"The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps maps depict more than 12,000 American towns and cities. They show the size, shape and construction materials of dwellings, commercial buildings, factories and other structures. They indicate both the names and width of streets, and show property boundaries and how individual buildings were used. House and block numbers are identified. They also show the location of water mains, fire alarm boxes and fire hydrants."

So using the 1902 hand-drawn fire insurance map of Everett we see the lot location where both the 1902 & 1929 Labor Temples will eventually be built as well as the future location of the “New” building built in 1957. When figuring out locations, it helps to use the railroad tunnel as reference point. You can see it to the left of the mostly empty lots to the north along Lombard.

Here is where we see the first use of land in the block section that will eventually be divided up into more lots and with all of them becoming property of the Everett Labor Council.

This was an important entry for the Fire Insurance Company, not only did it mark the location of a building that contains a “Forge & Machine Shop”, but it also noted the location some of the Everett Water Company’s Hydrants and Hoses. The Sanborn Map indicates that on that lot there are <u>at least</u> two 2” Hydrants and a 150’ Hose. The use of the plural “Hydrants” implies more than one. (There might have been even four.)The Hydrants are on that lot, but obviously not inside the building containing a forge and machine shop.



(Don’t get confused about the “1914”— that is the California street address.)

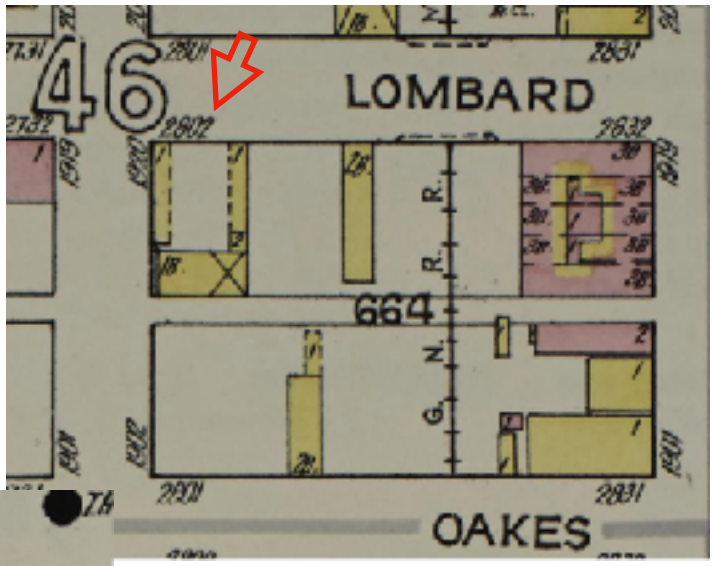
Later maps are a bit more specific as to the identity of the the building containing a forge and machine shop: it is a blacksmith shop with attached stables. You can see the building behind the people in this 1934 photo of the Wash. State Federation of Butchers. They are standing in front of the original labor temple with the diamond windows to the left and the 1929 labor temple to the right(see the milk-glass lights right of center? They are still there!).

The Blacksmith/Stable building is much lower so it appears that there must have been a slope that ran down to the stables from Lombard street.

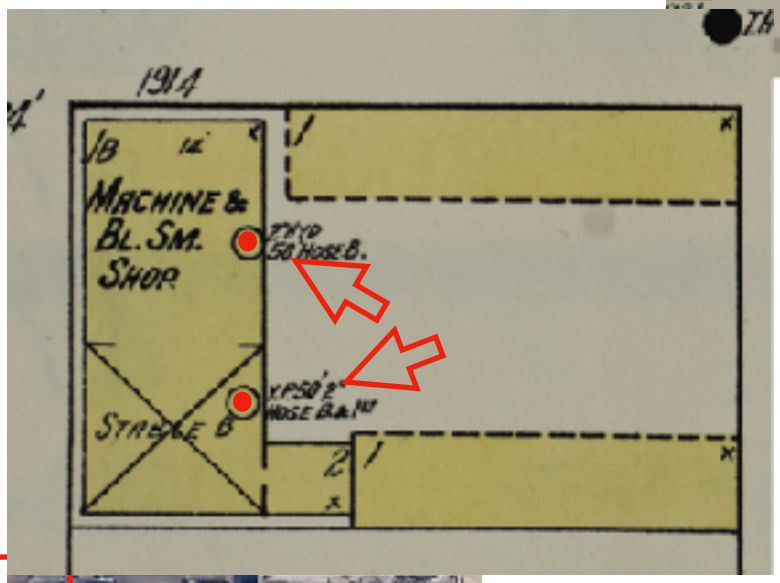
In this ~1902 photo of the original Labor Temple, before the 1929 building was built, you can see the south face of the Blacksmith/Stable building in the bottom right corner.

The current crazy-steep sloped driveway wasn’t added until 1958, so there must have had a couple paths that ran down to the stable. Since there was a driveway in front

of the original labor temple, I think that may have been a way down to the stables before the first temple was built.
There was also a driveway on the corner of Lombard and California that was removed later. It looks like it was about where the first “2” is in “2802” on this 1914 map index drawing. The first Labor temple is marked “2B” on the map.



The second image is rotated to the right, is also from 1914, and shows a little more detail and possible



locations of the hoses and hydrants. I put red dots on them.

If the scale is correct, the Southern-most hydrant is about 25-30 feet from the West property line and 50 feet from the North property line. This is a very rough estimate.

To the left is the modern parking lot and the infamous sink-hole. Although it can’t be seen from space, it does show up on an aerial view from Google Earth Pro.

I marked the sink hole with a red circle and I also marked the steep drop off next to the alleyway. I did this because the Blacksmith/Stable needed to be built next to this drop off and there needed to be space between the drop off and the building so that people could fit in there to build it. —This becomes important in the next section.

Sanborn maps were known for their attention to detail and for having an accurate scale. But we still

are accepting on faith that the scale is accurate.

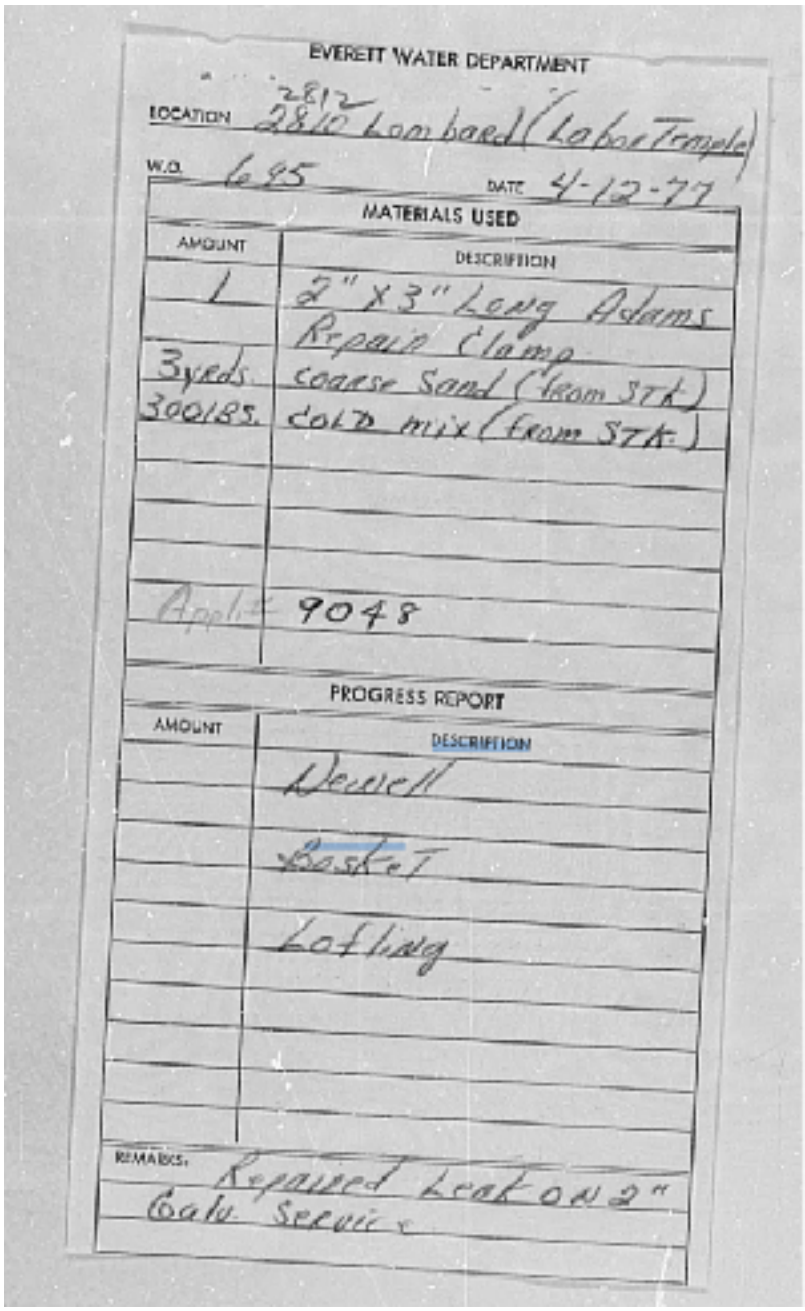
Taking the excerpt of the stable from the Sanborn map and superimposing the Google Earth aerial view gives us these results:

While it isn't a perfect match, it is close. There are a few things to remember:

1. There could have been more than two hydrants.
2. Those hydrants and hoses would probably have been *outside* the Blacksmith shop so that they could be accessed, which moves them even closer to our friend, The Sinkhole.
3. If it was the same line that feeds the building it probably had a "T" there where the pipe went up to the past hydrant and also along to the building. Capping the top of the "T" may be the problem or just somewhere on that junction.

The pipe/hydrant would be over 100 years old. The hydrant and the pipe feeding it could be gone. But IF it isn't and it is leaking, that could explain a sinkhole. I would suspect that IF the pipe is still there and it is leaking, then there should also be water running somewhere down the slope towards the railroad track.

And then this:



EVERETT WATER DEPARTMENT

LOCATION 2812 2810 Lombard (Labor Temple)

W.O. 685 DATE 4-12-77

MATERIALS USED

AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
1	2" X 3" Long Adams Repair Clamp
3yds.	coarse Sand (from STK)
300 LBS.	cold mix (from STK)
Appl #	9048

PROGRESS REPORT

AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
	Dewell
	Basket
	Lathing

REMARKS: Repaired Leak on 2" Gate Service

On April 12,1977 Everett Water Department did a water repair on the Labor Temple Property. Although they don't specify where the repair exactly was, it seems like they tried to fix a water issue. I strongly suspect that they tried to fix the sink hole. The materials include a repair clamp much like the one below along with 3 yards of

"Coarse Sand" and 300 pounds of "Cold Mix." Cold mix is Asphalt that doesn't have to be heated. And just to help you out here, "3 Yards of Coarse Sand" would weigh about 8,000 pounds. That is a lot of sand!

Looking around on the property I didn't see any place where they could put a few thousand pounds of sand and cover it with a 300 pound patch of asphalt except our friend the sinkhole.

They may have either done a poor repair that didn't show for years due to the sand and asphalt; the pipe may have leaked at another place close to the repair; or the clamp itself gave way after 50 years. It may be worth a trip to the Water Department to see if they will fix it.

~Fini